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Sep 5th 2018

Via ECFS
Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

**Re: In the Matter of Petition of USTelecom for Forbearance Pursuant to
47 U.S.C. Section 160(c); WC Docket No. 18-141; Category 1**

Dear FCC,

I'm writing to you today to express my support for competitive phone and Internet services. I believe having competitive phone and Internet service is VITAL in today's connected world. In some cases, it is the only lifeline that some people have. Allowing ILECs to arbitrarily deny competitive providers access to their wireline networks, a network that was built with American tax dollars by the way, is shortsighted and, dare I say, dangerous! Yes, I use the word "dangerous" on purpose, because I and my neighbors had an experience that involved a natural disaster and an infrastructure that was not able to withstand it. But more on that later.

About 9 years ago, I switched my voice service from what was then SBC to Sonic. I'd had Sonic for DSL Internet service for approximately 3 years at that point, and when I found out that they offered voice service too, I switched. I wasn't too happy with SBC at that time; they seemed to care more about the bottom line than serving their customers. I finally had my fill of SBC and decided to switch to Sonic for voice service as well as DSL. I've been a loyal customer of Sonic ever since.

I have a home-based business where I work creating web sites for people. So as I'm sure you can imagine, a reliable Internet connection is vital! As part of my business, I offered my clients hosting services, so that I could develop their web sites and then host them as well. This provided a convenience for my clients, since the circle of site development and deployment was greatly shortened in this arrangement. However, last year, my business fell on hard times. Up until last year, I had my own servers hosted at a colocation facility, as is standard with most types of hosting services. But those services are extremely expensive, and the business could no longer afford to pay the prices the colocation facilities were asking. But thanks to Sonic, and the flexibility they afford with their DSL service, I was able to relocate my servers to inside my home, and continue to provide such services to my clients. This is simply not something I would have been able to do with any other kind of in-home Internet service, such as AT&T U-verse or Comcast Xfinity. The flexibility afforded by Sonic's services allowed me to maintain a vital business service at an affordable price until I could get my servers back into a normal colocation facility. AT&T and Comcast cannot make those claims!

Although I did not live in a rural community when I first established service with Sonic, I do now.

I live in the small community of Guerneville, which is about 10 miles west of the bustling metropolis of Santa Rosa, CA. You may remember the name Santa Rosa, because last October they were struck by wildfires that devastated a sizable area of that city. Although we were not directly impacted by the fires in terms of property damage or loss of life, most people here did lose Internet and cell phone service. The only cell service that provides useful coverage in Guerneville is Verizon Wireless. But Verizon Wireless uses Comcast's Internet connectivity as a backbone to provide service out here. Plus, Comcast is the #1 provider of Internet service here in Guerneville. When the fires struck Santa Rosa, Comcast's infrastructure was damaged, and connectivity was down for 3 DAYS! That means people who relied on Comcast's infrastructure, which included those using Verizon Wireless, had no Internet or phone service for all that time! I, however, had phone and Internet service the entire time because I had Sonic phone and Internet service! Their infrastructure did not go down, so I was able to keep abreast of the latest developments, whether or not we needed to evacuate (we did not, fortunately), and I was able to stay in touch with my loved ones so they knew I was okay. Out here, we have next to no television reception over-the-air, and radio reception can be spotty, too, depending on which hill you might live behind. So Internet connectivity is VERY important here. It's clear that Comcast's, and by extension Verizon Wireless', infrastructure is not robust enough to withstand a major catastrophe such as we had in October of 2017. AT&T, which seems more content to focus on their wireless offerings, doesn't even have decent cell phone coverage in this area, and seem to be abandoning their wireline services altogether.

USTelecom makes the case that this is not 1996 anymore. Indeed it isn't. But the truth of the matter is current infrastructure without wireline service simply isn't robust enough to provide communication in the event of a disaster, as I and many of my close friends and neighbors found out last year. Furthermore, without competition, we would wind up with voice and Internet options that are lackluster at best. Competitors like Sonic provide services that the big telecom companies don't, and provide a needed nudge for the big providers to stay on their toes, which is vital in any competitive landscape. All USTelecom is doing is trying to save their membership a few bucks so that they can instead focus on infrastructure that is more profitable and less reliable. The wireline service is a great American resource, please don't let them destroy what our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents helped to build. Please reject USTelecom's petition for forbearance.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Robert Case